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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USNATO 000549

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SUBJECT: SERBIA WANTS MTA CHANGE; CONSIDERING IPAP FOR 2011

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission John Heffern. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Serbian MFA Director General for NATO and Defense Affairs Vujic told USNATO DCM Heffern on November 24 that Defense Minister Sutanovac would present Belgrade's ideas for changes to the Military Technical Agreement (MTA) to Secretary of Defense Gates when they meet on November 30. He said Belgrade hoped to officially present Ambassador Milinkovic as Serbia's Ambassador to NATO by the end of 2009, open its mission to NATO in the first half of 2010, and submit an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) in 2011. He indicated that Serbia favored NATO granting a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Montenegro and Bosnia at its December Foreign Ministerial. Vujic's message was positive but at times vague, and USNATO recommends that Washington continue to tell Belgrade that it needs to submit a serious MTA proposal to NATO. END SUMMARY

BELGRADE WANTS TO DEAL ON THE MTA

12. (C) Serbian MFA Director General for NATO and Defense Affairs Vujic, accompanied by Serbian Ambassador Milinkovic, told DCM on November 24 that they were visiting NATO delegations and Secretary General (SYG) Rasmussen to open a dialogue on changing implementation of the Kumanovo Military Technical Agreement (MTA); NATO signed the MTA with Belgrade at the cessation of hostilities in 1999, establishing air and ground safety zones around Kosovo's borders with the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Heffern stressed the need for Belgrade to tell NATO what MTA changes it seeks. Vujic said Defense Minister Sutanovac would present Belgrade's ideas to Secretary of Defense Gates when they meet on November 30 and would be open to any U.S. proposals.

13. (C) Vujic indicated that Belgrade would be looking for a U.S. response after Sutanovac meets with Secretary Gates and then would engage NATO on the proposal. He said Belgrade wanted to proceed quietly and would need help to sell a MTA deal with its public; Belgrade did not want to go forward unless it felt comfortable about the prospects for success. He stressed that Belgrade viewed Rasmussen's planned visit to Serbia in mid-December as linked to the MTA issue and ideally was looking for Rasmussen to come to Serbia with positive

news on the MTA. Serbia envisaged finalizing an agreement with NATO on the MTA within the first few months of 2010.

14. (C) Heffern said the U.S. expected positive signals from Serbia that showed it was serious. Vujic said Belgrade would be open to restoring Serbian Chief of Defense (CHOD) links with the KFOR commander (COMKFOR) before the end of 2009. He said this would have to be done on an informal basis at first in order to create a positive atmosphere.

BELGRADE SUPPORTS BUTMIR PROCESS AND MAP FOR BIH

15. (C) Vujic said Belgrade supports NATO offering Membership Action Plan (MAP) to both Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) at the December Foreign Ministerial. He argued that offering MAP would undercut nationalists in BiH and having Republika Srpska (RS) in MAP as part of BiH would be a positive signal for the public in Serbia. Vujic claimed that Belgrade also supports the Butmir process. He admitted Serbia had not tried to convince RS Prime Minister Dodik to sign up to the hard parts at Butmir but said it had encouraged him to continue to engage and reinforced its support for a BiH state with its present borders. He claimed that Belgrade had no influence with the RS.

SERBIA WANTS DIALOGUE ON KOSOVO

USNATO 00000549 002 OF 002

16. (C) Vujic complained that NATO was not being transparent with Serbia on Kosovo, particularly with regard to the stand-up of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF). He cautioned about the dangers of KFOR taking actions without consulting with Belgrade or the Kosovo Serbs. Vujic said there were rumors that KFOR planned to turn over responsibility for guarding Serb patrimonial sites to the KSF and indicated that it would be unacceptable to have Kosovo Albanians guarding these sites. He complained further that KFOR was taking security measures at the Valac electrical substation in northern Kosovo without explaining its actions, which was causing unease with local Kosovo Serbs and in Belgrade. Heffern responded that these sorts of issues were precisely why Belgrade needs to restore CHOD-COMKFOR ties.

SERBIA HOPES TO SUBMIT IPAP IN 2011

17. (C) Vujic said Belgrade would like to take steps to deepen Serbia's relationship with NATO. Vujic said Belgrade's goal was to officially present Amb. Milinkovic as Serbia's Ambassador to NATO by the end of 2009, open its mission to NATO in the first half of 2010, and submit an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) in 2011. Heffern welcomed these steps.

COMMENT

18. (C) Vujic's message was a positive, welcome one, particularly with regard to Serbian willingness to deepen relations with NATO. With regard to the MTA, USNATO recommends that Washington continue to communicate to Belgrade that it needs to submit a serious proposal to NATO with the specific changes it seeks. While Vujic said DM Sutanovac would present Serbia's proposal in Washington, he never clarified whether Belgrade's proposal would include specifics. Further, his comments on the SYG's visit made clear that the Serbians still hope the U.S. and NATO will carry their water for them.

DAALDER